

Eric the Viking, a restoration in increasing numbers of parts – December 2017

I'm an idiot. Just ask my friends. I work in an office, I pay my tax. I drive a sensible car that could do with a clean. I live in a normal house and my garden needs more attention that I give to it. I know how to use a computer since that is my job and I've done some DIY in my time. I have a Volkswagen Type 2 vehicle that isn't a T1 split screen as they are too expensive, or a T3 Vanagon or later as they are water cooled, which are complicated, I have a T2 aka a Bay window since it gives me the same exact problems as the T2 owned by my wife, you'll have seen pictures of Poppy. If I can do it, anyone can do it.

In 1968 the split screen had been discontinued and the T2 was born, building on the traditional ladder style chassis frame of the previous model but like everyone, a little wider. According to howmany.co.uk, there are about 5,300 VW motor caravans taxed and MOTd at the moment plus a further 3,000 listed as off the road. As we move into the fiftieth anniversary year of Bay windows, I am in a reflective mood – I'm not a vehicle restorer, my metalwork training at the age of 12 consisted of filing out bits of aluminium to the dulcet tones of my teacher telling me that I wasn't holding the file straight enough. I've very little idea how a vehicle is put together and a clutch master cylinder would have to slap me in the face for me to recognise it. None of this matters.

During 2017 I spent 112 hours working on my Bay window, taking things from the before picture of the chassis from below to the shot afterwards taken from above – new metal and you cannot see where we have been. Well, mostly.



Then the B posts at the back of the driver and passenger doors and if you have them the bulkheads that sit at the back of the seats has a rail along the same line under the floor. See the picture of the rust before and the shiny new metal afterwards. All this takes a great deal of time.



One of my Facebook friends, courtesy of this mad escapade has calculated that he has spent 2,000 man hours in a workshop on the south coast renovating just the metalwork on his Bay window from driving it in there 2 years ago,

stripping the engine, electrics, glass, steering and so on back to bare shell then cutting out all of the rust and rot. He is very close to finishing the metal and then it is painting time. Another acquaintance on Facebook has said that just the sanding of the outer bodywork ready for painting is six weeks of solid sanding. We must be mad!

I have accepted that there are days I want to get out to the garage and continue my quest to cut out rotten metal and replace it with new metal but never actually get there. I have accepted that as work gets ever faster and I move with it both speed and number of hours that my energy levels at home make for more rest and less metal grinding. I accept that my original five year mission to boldly go....oh no, wrong show....my original five year project plan might just be a little optimistic. This is good.

Outside of constantly cutting metal and scratching my head on how to add good metal in its stead, I have also spent just on 50 hours assisting a friend locally on his VW Beach Buggy. The floor pan is now complete, the engine, gearbox and brakes are now in. The steering is mainly installed and the gear lever after a little persuasion is now connected to the gearbox. I have learned a great deal about how much time it all takes and that if you read the manual, have the right tools and ask the Internet on a regular basis, as Volkswagen designed it to be simple, it turns out most things are simple. You may just need to angst and sweat over the complexity of that simplicity for a few hours!



Our aim now is to focus on the Buggy and get the other jobs completed for mechanical parts then get the Buggy body offered up, adjusted, sanded, painted and fitted before the electrics and last minute bits. Then MOT (custom vehicles over 40 years old still need one) by May 2018. We remain optimistic!

As I write this on New Year's Eve ready for the milestone edition number 150 of our great club magazine, I look forward to 2018 and working on my van. I've spent £5,439 and 174 man hours on it so far in 28 months. The project plan says that I will have finished the middle cargo area 5 months ago but I am 50 hours off that. The cab area and its chassis is not started and is about 80 hours labour and I am due to finish that tonight. Never mind. In a few weeks, I will see a number of you at the JK Maintenance Weekend and together we can learn about how to keep our beloved vehicles creating smiles for their owners and those we pass on our journeys. Pass me a screwdriver and a gasket, I'm off to polish my thrust washer.